

NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR NORTHWEST INDIANA

A UNIQUE COLLABORATION

ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Northwest Indiana area is one of seven locations selected for help from the nation's new Urban Waters Federal Partnership. This partnership will reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our Nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits. Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

- Break down federal program silos to promote more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Led by these federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the [Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#), to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>).

For more information, visit www.urbanwaters.gov

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST INDIANA AREA PARTNERSHIP

The Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership Pilot project strives to develop urban green spaces, reduce flood risks, improve water quality, and create a vision for greenway preservation and water trail development. Federal partner agencies will work with the Cities of Gary, Portage, Hammond, Valparaiso, Porter, Chesterton, East Chicago, and other interested municipalities and counties, Indiana State agencies, and local non-governmental organizations.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

Rivers Cleanup – In the 1980s, the EPA declared the Grand Calumet River an Area of Concern and classified it as impaired for all 14 possible uses. A \$31.1 million cleanup on the west branch of the river started in 2009, funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act. Partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Indiana Departments of Environmental Management and Natural Resources, and the Hammond Sanitary District.

In addition, the National Park Service, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and the cities of Valparaiso and Michigan City are working with organizations like Save the Dunes and the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association to improve water quality in local waterways. A U.S. Geological Survey water quality monitoring station on the Burns Waterway/Little Calumet River will help evaluate these efforts.

Watershed Awareness – The Little Calumet River and Salt Creek drain hundreds of square miles of northwest Indiana. Local governments and organizations are posting watershed boundary signs and installing markers on storm drains to remind people that the drains lead to Lake Michigan. Distribution of rain barrels to residents and classes on rain garden installation are among the initial steps to reduce runoff.

Lake-Centered Revitalization – The Marquette Plan was developed in 2005-2006 with extensive public input. Focusing on Lake Michigan as a critical economic, social, and ecological resource, the goals are to increase public access to the lake and other natural areas and develop recreational resources in urbanized areas to strengthen local economies. The Plan is being developed and implemented by the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission and many local partners.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The Northwest Indiana region has strong communities of families where residents take pride in both their industrial heritage and the local natural riches.



Community-led groups are acting to improve local conditions – economically, socially, and ecologically. Working collaboratively, federal agencies and their partners will work to achieve the local vision of a thriving region with clean water, good jobs, robust economies, resilient communities, and healthy ecosystems.

WHAT'S NEXT?

More Clean Water – The east branch of the Little Calumet River, Trail Creek, and Salt Creek have outstanding potential as recreational waterways but are currently classified as unfit for swimming. Reducing pollution from sewage, agricultural runoff, and non-point source drainage will improve the water quality for people and wildlife.

More Recovery from Industry – The Miller Woods area of Gary contains an outstanding chain of lagoons and lakes that were once part of the Grand Calumet River. The lagoons and lakes were severely degraded by years of industrial waste dumping in the watershed. The City of Gary through its Marquette Park renewal project has partnered with the National Park Service and others to remove the steel slag and other dumped materials that obstruct portions of the lagoons and lakes. The goals are to improve water quality and enhance recreational opportunities in nearby parks.

Better Stormwater Management – Combined sewer overflows affect all waterways in this region and are the single most important water quality problem for the beaches of Lake Michigan. Preventing sewage flows into the lake will protect public health and enhance the more than 3 million recreational visits to the lake each year. Efforts to develop improved stormwater management systems and cooperation between local, state, and Federal government agencies will be directed toward eliminating the combined sewer overflow problem.

More Jobs – Recent successes with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funded job training programs showed a new side to green jobs. Two programs led by the U.S. Forest Service helped teach crewmembers a range of skills needed to embark on new careers in environmental restoration in Northwest Indiana.

THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The partnership includes: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)), U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration (EDA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)), Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST INDIANA AREA

Northwest Indiana is an urban area heavily affected by industrial development. In the 20th century, Indiana's extraordinary natural shoreline of dunes, marshes, and rivers was extensively modified for human use. Rivers were dredged and channelized, marshes were drained and filled, and sand dunes were mined for glass production and to make room for industry. Today a remarkable amount of natural features remain, but the waterways continue to show the effects of industrial, agricultural, and urban uses.

The Urban Waters pilot project includes the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and adjacent areas. The National Lakeshore extends across three counties in northwest Indiana and encompasses 15 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, one-third of Indiana's shoreline. The location of the national lakeshore in and near 15 cities and towns across the region makes it a logical nexus for Urban Waters projects.



For more information on the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact:

Lynne Westphal
Project Leader and Research Social Scientist
People and Their Environments
USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station
(847) 866-9311 x11
lwestphal@fs.fed.us

Costa Dillon
Superintendent
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
National Park Service
(219) 395-1699
constantine_dillion@nps.gov